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United States Department of Agriculture,

DIVISION OF PUBLICATIONS,

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SEED DISTRIBUTION, 1896-97.

The act making appropriations for the Department of Agriculture for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1897, appropriates \$150,000 for the purchase and distribution of valuable seeds. As interpreted by the Attorney-General, in an opinion addressed to the Secretary of Agriculture dated June 30, 1896, this act requires that the Secretary of Agriculture shall purchase "seeds prepared for distribution" to the amount of \$130,000 and no less. He is authorized to purchase these seeds at public or private sale, as may be most advantageous for the Government.

The same act changes the statute which defines the kind of seed to be purchased so that it now reads as follows:

SEC. 527.—That the purchase and distribution of vegetable, field, and flower seeds, plants, shrubs, vines, bulbs, and cuttings, shall be of the freshest and best obtainable varieties and adapted to general cultivation.

It will be seen, therefore, that only \$20,000 is available for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1897, for the purchase of trees, shrubs, vines, cuttings, and plants, and for all the contingent expenses of distribution by the Department of Agriculture. In fact the whole of this amount will be required for the contingent expenses, so that there will be no funds available for anything else.

In order to secure the best seeds, adapted to the different sections of the country, and to facilitate their rapid and convenient distribution, the country was divided into six sections, according to agricultural and horticultural conditions, as follows. The sections are enumerated in the order in which the distribution will be made, since the act requires that the seed shall be distributed to the more southern latitudes first:

Section 1—South Atlantic States.

Section 2—Southwestern States.

Section 3—Pacific and Rocky Mountain States.

Section 4—Middle-Western States.

Section 5—Eastern States.

Section 6—Northwestern States.

The \$130,000 was so divided as to allow an equal amount (\$288.89) to each Congressional District and to each Senator and Territorial Delegate in Congress. The amount of money allotted to each section was, therefore, \$288.89 multiplied by its Congressional representation.

The lists of flower, field, and vegetable seeds adapted to these sections were prepared in conference with the officers of experiment stations and other experts in the respective sections, and a circular explaining the requirements of the Department was sent to all the seed houses in the country.

The lists of flower seeds and of field seeds and the amounts of each kind were fixed, and each seedsman was invited to state the number of papers of vegetable seeds he would supply, in addition to the required flower and field seeds, for the amount of money allotted to each section.

A large number of proposals were submitted, including many of the largest and most reputable seed houses in the country. The bids differed in the amounts charged for the required flower and field seeds and particularly in the number of papers of vegetable seed offered for the money allotted. The amount of money being fixed, the proposals had to be carefully considered and compared as to the quantity and quality of the seed offered for the money.

The members of the committee to which was assigned the duty of making these comparisons were instructed to rate the proposals on the following basis: First, as to the character and variety of the seed; second, as to the ability of the bidders to honestly, thoroughly, and efficiently fulfill their contracts; and, third, as to the number of packets of vegetable seeds offered (the flower and field seeds being fixed quantities). These ratings were made, and the committee recommended one firm in or near each section to receive the contract from that section. These recommendations have been approved by the Acting Secretary of Agriculture, with one slight modification, and are as follows:

Section.	Name of firm.
South Atlantic States	T. W. Wood & Sons, Richmond, Va.
Southwestern States	Ullathorne Seed Co., Memphis, Tenn.
Pacific States	(Not yet awarded.)
Middle-Western States	John A. Salzer Seed Co., LaCrosse, Wis.
Eastern States	W. Atlee Burpee, Philadelphia, Pa.
Northwestern States	L. L. May & Co., St. Paul, Minn.

Proposals from the Pacific Coast seedsmen having failed to arrive in time for consideration, the award for the Pacific and Rocky Mountain section has been necessarily delayed. It is not possible to give exactly the total number of packets of seeds which will be distributed, but estimating the Pacific section on the basis of the amounts purchased in other sections, it is safe to say that each Senator, Representative and Territorial Delegate in Congress will have at his disposal (after deducting one-third allotted by law to the Secretary of Agriculture) nearly 30,000 packets of seeds, or about twice as many as last year. The amount expended for seed last year was \$80,500; it will be seen therefore that the Department has this year secured twice as much seed, of greater variety, for considerably less than twice as much money as last year. Even this comparison, however, is not adequate since all the field seed distributed this year (except tobacco) will be in quart packages, whereas last year no quart packages of any kind were distributed. This improved showing is due to the longer time allowed this year for making the contracts, and to the adoption of the above plan of subdivision into sections.

